Cooperative Convention Amazes Sponsors

National Wholesale Organization Formed Successfully in West Encouraging Spread of Movement Eastward—Brooklyn Woman Leader in New York City

THE first national convention to discuss cooperation, recently held in Springfield, Ill., was a significant event in the rapidly growing cooperative movement in this country. Cooperative marketing associations have had marked success in the United States, but the existence of cooperative stores was for years precarious. To-day they are prospering and this is largely due to the interest and enthusiasm with which working men are taking hold of them.

This is illustrated by the personnel of the convention. When the Cooperative League of America issued a call for this first national gathering it remained to be seen who would respond. The first day of the congress revealed the fact that the delegates who had travelled from New England, from the mining districts of the Alleghanies and the Central and north Central States, the men who had come over the Rockies from the California coast and the Puget Sound district, the cooperators from the smelting regions of Montana, from industrial cities like Cleveland and Chicago, were predominantly labor men.

Seven Wholesale Ones Merged.

The significant event of the convention from a business point of view was the merging of the seven cooperative wholesales in this country into the National Cooperative Wholesale. The president is Dalton C. Clark, head of the cooperative wholesale for the tri-States district (Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio); the vice-president, Carl Lunn, head of the cooperative wholesale for the Puget Sound district; the secretary-treasurer, Duncan McDonald, formerly treasurer of the United Mine Workers and now head of the cooperative wholesale for the Central States district. The four other directors are Ernest O. F. Ames, head of the cooperative wholesale for the Pacific coast district; K. E. Grendahl, head of the cooperative wholesale for the Eastern district; John Nummivuori, head of the cooperative wholesale for the north Central States district, and C. F. Lowrie, head of the cooperative wholesale for the Northwest district.

That was surprise number one, the formation of a national wholesale. The next astounding thing was the discovery that this combination represents a turnover of $20,200,000 from consumers' cooperatives and nearly $100,000,000 from producers' cooperatives. This group does not represent more than a third of the business done by cooperatives in the United States. The Cooperative League of America has up to date discovered 1,000 cooperative stores in the country, and part of the work of the new wholesale combination will be to affiliate the two-thirds that are still isolated and not receiving the benefits of the wholesale discounts represented by the allied group.

The three days convention was really more like a continuous surprise party than a business meeting. It was a good deal like one of those family conventions where all of the Howards or the Perkinses come together for the first time and discover what their kin, whom they have never met before, are doing. Only, of course, there were collective human interest stories rather than individual narratives, for that is the crux of cooperation.

No natural leader can get anywhere alone in this field. It's the sustained and united effort of a group that makes a successful cooperative store. The prowess of cooperators in Seattle might have suggested the cloud of glory that always hangs over the almost mythical exploits of our ancestors had the Seattle story not been so very modern and so replete with figures.

Seattle Leads in Cooperative Work.

In less than four years Seattle has reached a point where it leads every other city in the country in its cooperative projects. The cooperative ball was really set rolling by laundry employers who ignored the minimum wage law for women, with the result that a group of laundry workers decided to raise money and run a laundry of their own, and succeeded in doing so after a struggle with certain business interests that hampered the project at every turn.

Secret, baffling complications delayed the erection and control of their building. Then it was found impossible to get any firm on the coast or for a long way east which handled laundry machinery to sell them equipment. Certain firms confessed that they had been warned that private laundry owners would never do business with them again if they sold to the cooperative.

At last a firm that was going out of business sold and sent them the machinery, which was secretly delivered, installed and kept under guard. Fine! at last they were going to do business. But they found that no one would sell them soap, starch and other supplies of that nature. The cooperators had finally to hunt a salesman who would buy the goods and have them delivered in his cellar, from where they were secretly carried by night.

At last the laundry opened. To-day it is doing a business of $2,300 a week. The cooperators have also developed a bakery with three sales rooms and restaurants. They have taken over the city market, selling meats, dairy products, fruits and vegetables. The sales in the meat department alone were $57,000 last month.

Helps Dairy Farmers Greatly.

Nor has cooperation stopped here. It owns the largest sausage plant in Seattle, has taken over a slaughter house, and on appeal from the farmers, who were getting only 20 cents a gallon for milk that retailed at 60 cents a gallon, has rescued them from the distributers by buying a $10,000 plant, which is being enlarged to three times its former size, and will soon put a cooperative brand of condensed milk on the market. In the Puget Sound district around Seattle labor has taken over thirty-one shingle and lumber mills.

It is generous checks from the unions that have enabled cooperation to move forward so rapidly in this district. The market and the milk projects have brought ready contributions from the farmers. One union, the ship builders, which numbers 20,000 men in Seattle, has given checks running as high as $12,000 at a time.

The initial opposition, while embarassing, was from the cooperators' point of view very beneficial, as it aroused among working people and farmers the enthusiasm and the sustained effort necessary to the movement.

In Montana the cooperative movement really never became vigorous until attacked by mining and milling interests. "It was what put punch into the group," explained a delegate from that part of the country.

In Great Falls, Mon., a smelting town of about 40,000, the cooperative association which had organized an office to sell wheat in St. Paul, found itself opposed by the millers who retaliated by refusing to sell flour in Great Falls. This proved to be an opportunity for the small local cooperative store which the association had started. It secured flour from independent millers and sold to the whole city. Getting the flour to Great Falls over the railroad was a problem, for some influence would keep sidetracking the freight. But cooperators saw to it that friendly railway employees kept slipping the freight along and so the cooperative won.

Now Has Chain of 100 Stores.

The next move of private interests was one that really made the cooperative store. Labor was getting so powerful in the city that at the suggestion of the Employers' Association the business men closed every store in town to bring labor to terms. Another opportunity for the little cooperative store which was still so small that it had been overlooked as the weak point in the campaign. The cooperative fed the town—it happened that the store had just got in a large stock of goods—but it was problematical how long it could continue to do so. There was just one day's supply left when the business men gave in and opened their doors again. To-day this cooperative has grown to a wholesale with a chain of 100 stores.

Delegates crowded around the modest little Scotchman who told the tale. "And you people did all that!" "And we never heard of it!" men exclaimed as they shook his hand in turn.

In Illinois there is a chain of seventy cooperative stores. "We organized," the miners said, "because we couldn't keep wages going up as fast as the price of goods." Here it is the Italians who are proving their ability as cooperators. In one town where a cooperative had just been started an Italian came in and asked the manager, "You could use one thousand dollar? I have one thousand dollar. I

MRS. JAMES WARBASSE.

put it into 'Co-op.'" His offer—well, of course it was accepted, like those of others who gave sums as high as $500, until to-day the store has more money then it needs.

It is the Finns, really, who have made the greatest success of cooperation in this country. In the textile town of Fitchburg, Mass., which now has the largest Finnish population of any town in the country, and in towns around Boston, they are running their own stores, boarding houses and bakeries. In four towns they run their own milk carts.

They have a publishing house that has grown from a nest egg of $10 to a plant worth $200,000. Four years ago—or was it only two? The Finns' cooperatives prosper so rapidly—they started a bank with $40,000. Now they bank half a million.

The secret of Finnish success doesn't lie only in enterprise and stubborn determination, but in the conception of cooperation as a new social order, a way of securing democracy. The Finns don't take out of the cooperative many of the pennies it saves; they leave them in to enlarge the business and to provide clubs and amusements. The pennies saved, they say, are few when measured by individual savings, but make a substantial sum when measured collectively, especially if they are kept turning over and over.

Finns Provide Education, Too.

A good illustration of this social spirit is to be found in the older Finnish districts of the north Central States where the business done through the long chain of cooperatively owned enterprises runs into millions of dollars. The Finns never neglect the educational side of the work. They provide clubs and classes and publications going to keep the spirit of their work growing. One of their publications is a monthly magazine intended to educate their women in suffrage and cooperation.

The way not to start cooperatives can be illustrated by the 100 cooperative stores of California, most of which have gone to pieces. They failed for the reason that there was no social vision behind them, merely the desire to save a little on the grocery bills. In the face of the prejudice created by former failures it took the courage of a man like Ernest Ames, an English minister and friend of Tolstoy, to build another chain of stores grounded on community life. His has perhaps been the most difficult task of any organizer in the country.

Dalton Clark in the tri-States district around Pittsburg has been putting the cooperatives on a social basis. Backed by the funds and enthusiasm of the labor men he has reorganized isolated stores until to-day, together with the new stores, they form a chain of seventy stores with the additional leverage of a wholesale organization.

It is to help stores to start right that the most important committee of the convention was appointed, one on national unity, of which Mrs. James Warbasse of Brooklyn is chairman. Its work is to secure organizers, establish a school for training store managers—for the business of running a cooperative store is very different from that of the privately owned store—and to provide pamphlets telling new groups how to start a cooperative store and the simplest methods of handling cooperative accounts.

Guynemer's Boyhood Forecast Ace's Future

INTERESTING light on the boyhood of Georges Guynemer, the great French ace, is given by a book written by Henry Bordeaux and just translated into English by Mrs. Louise Morgan Still. His father placed Georges in Stanislaus College, Paris, at the age of 12, and one of the prefects there, the Abbe Chesnais, in hitherto unpublished notes says of his pupil:

"His eyes vividly expressed the headstrong, fighting nature of the boy; he did not care for quiet games, but was devoted to those requiring skill, agility and force. He liked best of all *la petite guerre*, highly popular among the younger classes.

"The players were divided in two armies, each commanded by a general chosen by the pupils themselves, and having officers of all ranks. Each soldier wore on his left arm a movable brassard. The object of the battle was the capture of a flag, and its defence, set up on a column or a wall or a tree in the courtyard. The soldier from whom his brassard was taken was considered dead.

"Guynemer, who was somewhat weak and sickly, always remained a private soldier. His comrades, who wanted a general with strength enough to maintain authority, never dreamed of placing him at their head. But when a choice of soldiers was to be made his name was called among the first, for he was counted among the best.

"Although he had not much strength, he had agility, a quick eye, cleverness, caution and a talent for strategy. He played his game himself, not liking to take suggestions from his chiefs. He followed his own ideas. Always he attacked the strongest enemy and attacked those comrades who held the highest rank.

"With the suppleness of a cat he climbed trees, flung himself to the ground, crept along barriers, slipped between the legs of his adversaries and bounded triumphantly off with a number of brassards. It was a great joy to him to bring the trophies to his general."

The abbe's portrait delineates nearly all the characteristics that made Guynemer the ace of aces. The individuality of his fighting, his skill and daring, his bent for strategy all counted to the extreme in his air battles. A rather more personal description is recorded by M. Bordeaux, quoting from the *Journal des Debats*. The writer says:

"He was a restless looking little boy, thinner and paler than the others, whose round, black eyes seemed to shine with a sombre brilliance. Those eyes, which eight to ten years later were to hunt and pursue so many airplanes, were passionately self-willed. The same temperament is evident in a snapshot of the same period in which Georges is seen playing at war.

"The college register of this year tells us he had a clear, active, well balanced mind, but that he was thoughtless, mischief making, disorderly, careless; that he did not work and was undisciplined though without malice; that he was very proud and ambitious to attain first rank. In fact at the end of the first year young Guynemer received the first prize for Latin translation, the first prize for arithmetic and four honorable mentions."

M. Bordeaux's book, "The Life of Guynemer, Knight of the Air," is replete with similar personal descriptions and its English version should prove as popular as has the original.